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STATEMENT BY RUSSELL ANDERSON

ON THE MASSACRE IN EAST TIMOR, ON THE 12th NOVEMBER, 1991

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THE INDONESIAN MASSACRE OF EAST TIMORESE IN DILI 12TH OF NOVEMBER 1991

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Reasons for visiting East Timor

During 1991 my wife , Saskia Kouwenberg and I had promised ourselves to be in the Netherlands to celebrate Xmas with her family. We decided to have a holiday traveling through Indonesia for two months on our way to the Netherlands. Shortly before leaving Australia we heard, on the radio, of the Paliamentry Delegations visit to East Timor .

I knew about the situation and a bit of the history of East Timor. The visit of the Delegation coincided with our visit . So we decided to be present, in Dili when the delegation arrived.

I had been a radio journalist for 8 Top Fm, a Darwin radio station for eight months, putting together a weekly half hour environmental programme. So I took my recorder with me. I also like any tourist took my camera.

Before leaving Australia we got in contact with an East Timorese refugee . He explained to us the present situation and we asked him for names of people to talk to inside East Timor. We also met two europeans, just arrived in Darwin from East Timor. We met them again in East Timor.We left Australia with no names of people to see, but hoped to meet people whilst their.

We stayed in Dili for so long, 18 days mainly because Saskia had back problems and could not travel. In all honesty this can be checked at several doctors in Darwin. Saskia felt a lot of pain in her back and was the reason she did not attend the mass and demonstration on the 12th of November.

It could also be said we took an interest in the situation of East Timor and found this a double reason to stay. Especially after the funeral procession where I experienced the despairatness of the East Timorese for the world to understand their plight. Although it was Saskia`s back which stopped us, several times from taking the bumpy bus journey to Kupang.

Arrival and Observations

I arrived in Dili on the 26th of October. It was only two days later that two or three people died at the Motael Church. I heard that the Incident started at midnight when people, in civil cloths threw rocks at the Church. Dozens of East Timorese were seeking refuge inside the Motael for fear of being arrested, tortured or killed. Like hundreds of other East Timorese they were seeking a safe place to hide from accusations of having been involved in past or present anti - Indonesia activities pria to the visit of the Parliamentary Delegation .

Armed with pistols and batons the military intervened on the chuchgrounds one and a half hours later. In the militaries efforts to arrest and the East Timorese attempts to escape Sebastio Gomez Rangel was shot several times another boy died of gunshot wounds and a soldier was stabbed, It was said , in response to the shooting of Sebastian. Dozens of East Timorese were arrested and some were said to be still in prison by the time we left East Timor.

I attended the mass and funeral procession for Serbastio Gomez Rangel, on the29th Nov. The procession went the same direction as the 12th of November demonstration. The procession consisted of a cross section of ages. There were no banners on the procession but the same shouts of " Viva, Viva Timor Leste, Independence, Viva Xananna and Viva Sebastio " echoed through the streets of Dili. No military were to be seen on the streets during the funeral procession, contrary to normality.

I could talk in detail about the military presence in East Timor however there are already well documented accounts. I would like to confirm these reports by saying that East Timor has a strong feeling of an occupied country.

Military are present everywhere from the streets of Dili to the smallest village, in market places, resturants and occupying the most important buildings. I've heard since, there are special soldiers for building roads. I witnessed this several times whilst traveling through the country-side Armed soldiers sitting in the cabin of bulldozers and graders . Their sole purpose looked like protecting the driver as they sat with automatic rifles resting in their laps. Armed soliders also stood along the roadside.

During my two brief visits to the country-side I saw a total of 38 military trucks ,on the move , with fully equipped soldiers. I saw three jeeps and three armoured vechiles, at one stage blocking our path.

Roadblocks were frequent. I had my bag searched and my traveling companion had all her papers gone through.

As a tourist we took some pictures of the beautiful traditioal houses. At one pointthe owner of a house did not allow us to take a picture of his house because there were military watching by the roadside. We continued 200 meters along the road, out of the militaries sight and were greeted with the usual village friendliness as they happily posed while we took pictures of the stunning house they had built.

With estimates by the local people as high as 70,000 Indonesian military in East Timor , I could go on and on.

THE MASSACRE
12TH OF NOVEMBER

I attended the Catholic Mass held at the Motael Church on the 12th Nov at 6am In commemeration of Sebastio Gomez Rangel`s death. Due to the large crowd, approximately 4,000 the mass was moved outdoors, to the west of the church still within the church grounds. All was quiet . Open jeeps with military sitting in the back drove by and observed the crowd.

A demonstration was planned to start after the mass. I beleive the demonstration was organized because of the expectations held by the visit of the Parliamentry Delegation and the frustration felt due to its cancellation. There was also a UN delegate a Mr Kooijman (special rapporteur on torture) staying in Dili for 3days.

With the mass over people moved to the entrance way of the churchyard and onto the street. Concealed banners were unfurled and hidden T-shirts with slogans were displayed. No military were to be seen.

As more and more banners unfurled into a sea of waving slogans the crowd became vocal with shouts of "Viva, Viva Sebastio, Viva Timor Leste, Independence, Viva Xananna ". The age grouping of the demonstrators were again mixed but younger people were more visible in the front. The faces of the East Timorese lit up with an expression of life and vigour. Pent up frustrations seemed to be released with a feeling of at last being able to show openly their cries for independence in the hope that the world was watching. I felt a nervousness ,a sence of fear swell within me as I remembered I was in an occupied country. I also saw a nervous fear on peoples faces as their eyes scanned the streets.

From the beginning organized demonstration marshals were in attandence. It seemed the marshals were a youth group, distinguished by similar clothing. A marshal tried to operate a megaphone but had problems with feedback creating a siren sound. Eventually he spoke to the crowd who were still unfurling banners and starting to move along the planned route.

The march was led by two women/ girls carrying traditional baskets of flowers drapped with knitted colourful cloth. From the beginning marshals joined arms to contain the lead by slowing down the enthusiastic banner wavers who wanted to run (not in any direction, it never looked like a riotess situation they jogged ran and walked along the route). The marshals had a hard time , shouting at people to slow down and having to continually regroup.

I stayed at the front of the march and had a hard time keeping up. In the simmering heat I was sweating and panting. The march proceeded along the harbour side. Ironically a military ship was preparing to dock. The seafront was lined with Indonesian ships and the soliders standing in the confines of the harbour looked on with disgust and hatred on their faces.

The demonstration went along Jl Gov. Alves Aldeia (street name) past the governours house and turned right into Jl Bispo Medeiros. Near the Resende New Inn Hotel a road sign (marking a crossing ahead) was banged about ten times by demonstraters as they passed. Marshals yelled and ran quickly to the spot and stayed there to make sure no-one else hit the road sign.

The head of the march reached the roundabout and stopped (infront of the Telecommunication Center). The marshals and others convinced a now tired and exhausted lead to wait for the others. The march was almost divided with a few people inbetween and a larger group, a block away still coming up Jl Bispo Medeiros.

While everyone waited at the roundabout a man, hopping but supported by two others approached me. I was eagerly shown his dripping bloodied calf and foot. A cloth had been tied around his upper calf. Not speaking the language I could not understand their efforts to tell me what had happened.

The demonstration walked off again as one group. I found myself about 40meters from the front. I had an audio cassette recorder and people were talking into the microphone.

I had noticed military at the barracks on the corner of Jl Av Sada Bandeira and Jl Bispo Medeiros. Also near the Resende Hotel . I saw a lot of police at what appeared to be a main police station on the right hand side just after the roundabout. They had pistols in their pouchs standing shoulder to shoulder with riot sticks at the ready. Every time I saw military or police they stood well back from the demonstration between 30 to 50 meters away. The police at this " main station " were the closest to the demonstration, I saw, approximately 30 meters.

At this point two demonstraters with a large Fretlin flag waved and jumped enthusiastically displaying their boldness .

I walked quickly through the crowd to get to the front again. By the time I got to the cemetry entrance way demonstrators were still climbing the wall for photographers to take pictures of the banners and the hands held high in a V sign.

I gave a quick count as the crowd swelled in front of the cemetery. I estimated between 5 to 6 thousand people. I remembered at Sebastio Gomez`s funeral many people joined the procession at the cemetry. I put this down to the area being more residential and a safer place for more afraid people to join in.

In this residential area I saw a lot of people also standing by the roadside. Some in government blue shirts and others in normal dress while others stood further back near their house. Very few offered a gesture of solidarity or a yell of support. It could have been a sign of what was to come. But it looked like the the town of Dili had closed and everybody was there. A lot of school children still wearing there school uniform joined the march from a nearby school. School was coming out or it had closed because of the demonstration. Some children so small reached up and grabbed the microphone in my hand.

As the photos were taken of the people standing on the front cemetery wall.
Others moved inside to say prayers and lay flowers on Sebastio Gomes~s grave.Again the demonstration was organized. A marshal announced the ceremony of prayers and laying of flowers through a mega-phone.

I stayed infront of the cemetry. Interviewing people in my broken spanish. Asked about their feelings of the Parliamentary Delegations cancellation . At the same time I was noticing most people were walking away (continuing south down the road). I found out later the demonstration was to continue in that direction to Bishop Belo`s house and to Hotel Tourismo where Mr Kooijman was staying. However I felt people were walking away from fear of the unknown. Of what might happen.

To the south of the demonstration the military were forming. The first truck was about 100 meters away from the diminishing crowd. These soldiers , in what I will call the " first truck ", wore a distinctive camoflaged unifrom. These were the ones I saw methodically form the frontal assembly of the military attack and they were the ones who created the initial onslaught and deaths. Later that day this was confirmed by the americans Amy Goodman and Alan Nairn who stood between the demonstrators and the soliders during the massacre.

Two trucks stopped behind the " first truck ". I noticed military marching down the road along the route the demonstration had just walked. The second truck , with a roar of its engine drove towards the crowd but turned left . The crowd yelled. I felt there was excitment because the military were leaving . They , however , parked just around the corner started filing out of the truck.

I was frightened by the movement of the truck and noticed most people had moved away. I walked through the crowd and stood at the back. At a quick count I estimated 1,000 infront of the cemetry entrance way. More people were still inside the cemetery.

I observed the " first truck " was almost empty as the last solidiers unfiled and where forming a front line to confront the demonstration. More military where marching down the street and I saw some military peeping around the cemetry wall from the north side. All of these military wore a green or dark green uniform except for the solidiers from the " first truck ". It was clear the military were being commanded into a confrontational position.

From the back of the crowd I looked around for the others (the foreigners). I saw Bob Muntz. He stood just inside the cemetry. On seeing me he came out . We looked up to see the soldiers of the "first truck ". They were now in three lines about 15 abreast the street. From were I was standing they looked quite close to the demonstrators about 80 meters.

From the positions I stood I heard no warning to the crowd to disperse. Not that I would have understood the language, but any shout or order through a megaphone I would have heard and recognized such an order.
There was none, not a single warning.

Bob Muntz and I decided we should leave. I had taken ten hurried steps north along the cemetry wall and was glancing back to see the helmets of the military front line bobbing up and down, jogging or marching towards the crowd. The crowd began to walk backwards , walk away some were already running.

Suddenly a few shots rang out continued by an explosive volly of automatic rifle fire that persisted for 2 to 3 minutes. It sounded like the whole fifteen in the front row had their fingers pressed firmly on the trigger. They were firing directly into the crowd.

I ran like everybody else. I took a quick glance around and saw people falling. I realised that I would be shot in the back if a bullet lodged into my body. Most people , especially in that initial burst of fire would have been shot in the back running away.

In my vicinity most people ran around the south side of the cemetry to get out of the line of fire. Once around the corner I scampered through barbed wire fences frantically jumping over tin fences following the rivers of people past houses trees and more fences. I lost Bob Muntz early on as I followed a different path. I was running a zig zag direction going south east

My body began to convulse from fear and I was out of breath. I felt very sick and sat down unable to run. There did`nt seem as many shots being fired. Suddenlly it started again from the direction of the cemetry and some shots seemed much closer. I was up and running again. The soldiers were chasing us.

I changed direction many times as small bursts of fire went off sometimes as close as 50meters. Others sounded further away. My eyes were wide open watching the reaction and direction of the people running, in front and behind me. My eyes scanned any nook or cranny. I stayed alert for any movement that may have indicated soldiers with automatic rifles. Possibly from any and all directions.

After at least 15minutes of running I came to a bitumen road. The street was called Jl Belarmino Lobo and I was`nt far from the intersection with Jl Kuluhurr . I was so glad and surprised the military had not cordoned of the whole area. I started walking as calmly as possible down the street . Hundreds of people were fleeing across the road. Not far from the corner people stricken with fear sought my protection by walking with me. One person grabbed my wrist tightly and would`nt let go, saying " come house , with me ". By that stage I was under no illusions that my white, vulnerable skin could protect any of these East Timorese. Nevertheless he was terrified so I said I would go with him. We both approached the corner shaking. We looked up and down. No military. We continued down the street.

Taxis`s drove past and people yelled at them to stop. As the taxis`s came to a tentative halt my attached companion ran towards the taxi, like about twenty others. The taxi filled in seconds. People climbed on top, hung of the doors and rear bumper bar. As the taxi drove off people were flung and fell to the ground. This happened three more times as I walked down the street towards my Hotel.

Back at the hotel there was no-one. I was terrified, pacing up and down. I waited. Had a shower and changed my cloths that had been ripped by the barbed wire fences.

After waiting half an hour I decided to ride around town on a motorbike. Looking back now this was madness but I had to know what happened to the others. I turned the bike up Jl Belarmino Lobo the street I had walked down. Noticing there were no military I rode cautiouslly up the street. About three quarters of the way twenty soldiers rounded the corner. Thinking I would look suspicious turning the bike around I continued.

The soldiers noticed me and glared. Some of them were looking in houses around corners and over fences. Some had there automatic weapons in a position to fire and others had them strapped over their shoulder. I thought I would be safe I'd changed cloths, was wearing a helmut and had sunglasses on.I gave a warm good morning and a smile. The glare on most of them changed to a smile and I motored on.

Turning right I saw soldiers all along the street. It looked like a mopping up operation. They too were searching the area. I noticed but did not stare at three bodies in front of a house about 30 meters off the road.

Upon reaching the next corner I gave way to two military trucks packed with soliders. I again waved and smiled but the second truck started yelling and pointing at me. The driver did`nt stop. Turning right again I was close to the cemetry. There were three speeding trucks heading towards the cemetry so I diverted and went back to the Hotel.

Bob Muntz was back. Bob had a wound on his arm. Blood seeped through his shirt. He told me Kamal was shot several times and had been found bleeding profusely in the street. Karmal had been taken to the military hospital. There was no time for sadness. We had to think . We still feared for our lives. How do we get to the hospital to see him? What about the others? **What about the East Timorese?**

AFTER THE MASSACRE

By nightfall we`d seen each other (the foreigners). Except for Kamal who died in hospital later. We talked about how it happened . I saw no physical provocation from the crowd. No brandishing of knifes or mashettees, no stone throwing or stick waving. This was confirmed by Amy and Alan who stood between the demonstraters and the soldiers, by Stephen Cox and Chris Wenner who stood inside the cemetery and Bob Muntz who stood at the back of the crowd, infront of the cemetery.

Stephen Cox had told me how sparodic bursts of fire had continued into the cemetery for half an hour. The layout of the cemetery is important . Its about the size of football oval and has very high walls. You would have to be extremely fit to climb over them. The people inside were completely trapped.

I became even more scared for my life after hearing about the savage beatings Alan, Amy and Stephen had received and of the threats, by gunpoint, made to their lives. I saw Alans (later diagnoised as a fractured skull) bleeding head and his cloths covered in blood.

I was fortunate enough to get away from the massacre site and did not see how many had been killed. Alan and Amy told me they saw at least 50 lying in front of the cemetery. Stephen said that within his field of vision he saw hundreds of bodies lying around dead, wounded or cowering in fear. With so many wounded I imagined a lot would die later in hospital.

Terrified that night I was unable to sleep near the window in our hotel room. I moved the mattress to the floor and slept in a corner half inside the bathroom and behind a wardrobe.

I left Dili by plane on the 1.30pm flight on Wednesday the 13th of November. Stephen Cox, Bob Muntz, Saskia Kouwenberg and myself bought tickets and were told to be at the airport by 1 o`clock. Arriving late at 1.05pm we were told we could not get on , the plane was full. Through pure fear for our lives we walked onto the tarmack and tried to enter the plane.

The airport security tried to arrest Saskia (who had taken our lead) but she physically fought them off. Some of us ran back for our boarding passes and Saskia stayed on the tarmack effectivelly stopping the plane from taking off. Stephen and I received our boarding passes and had to physically fight our way back to the tarmack and not to the waiting room where they tried to detain us. We boarded the plane and there were exactly four vacant seats. With sweating foreheads and beating hearts the plane lifted off the tarmack of East Timor, headed for Kupang.

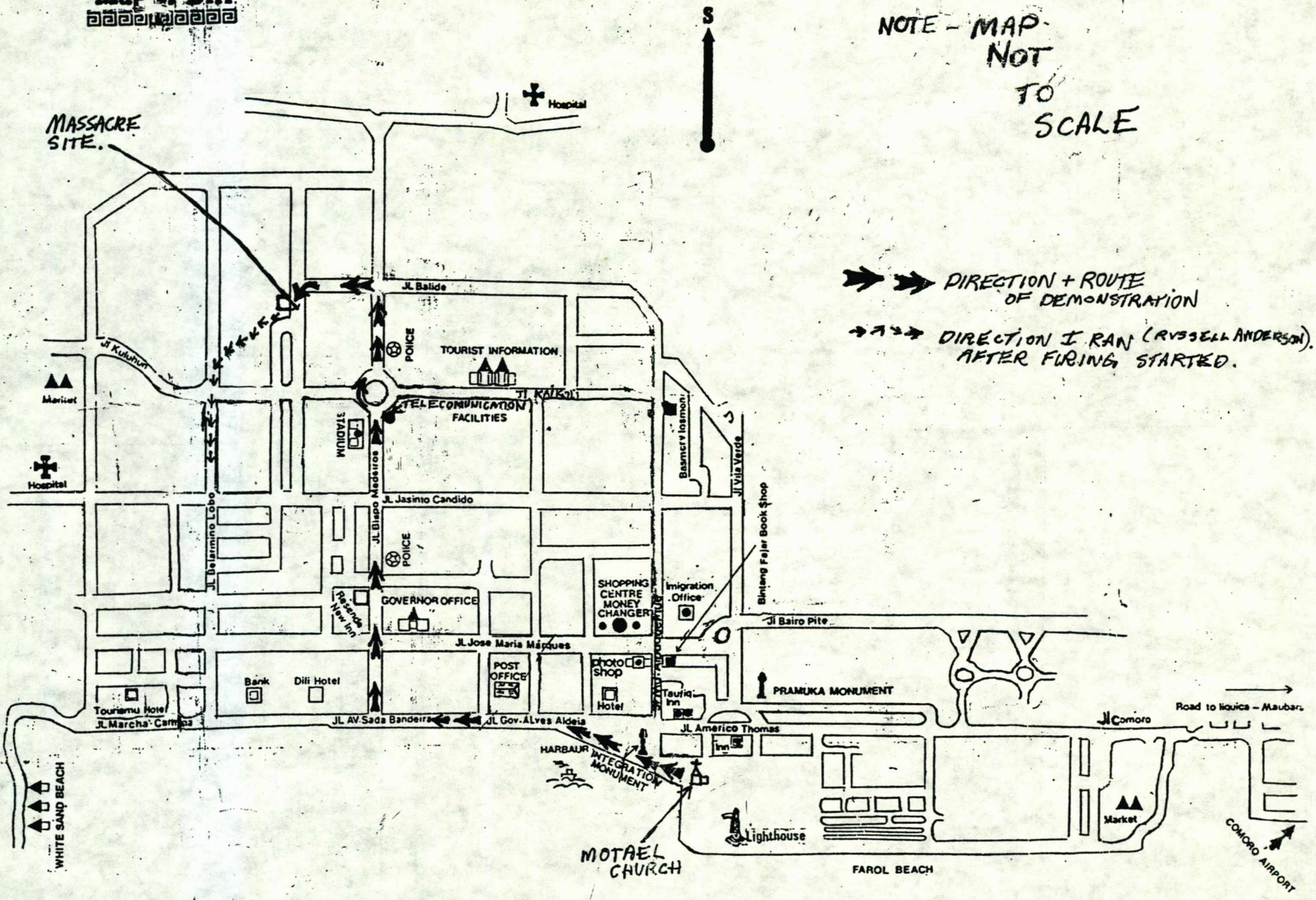
While in Kupang and later in Australia I was extremelly saddened to hear reports from Indonesia of a " riotess situation " where the soldiers had to act in " self defence ". This was definately not the case as I've made clear in this statement.

In my opinion it was a cold blooded butcheress massacre. Statements about orders like " dont fire " being mistaken for " fire " do not ring true. The firing went on and on . The foreigners who were not brandishing or throwing anything received the same treatment as the East Timorese. The only difference was the foreigners, those still alive, were able to flee the country and tell what had happened.

Russell Anderson

Russell Anderson

Map of Dili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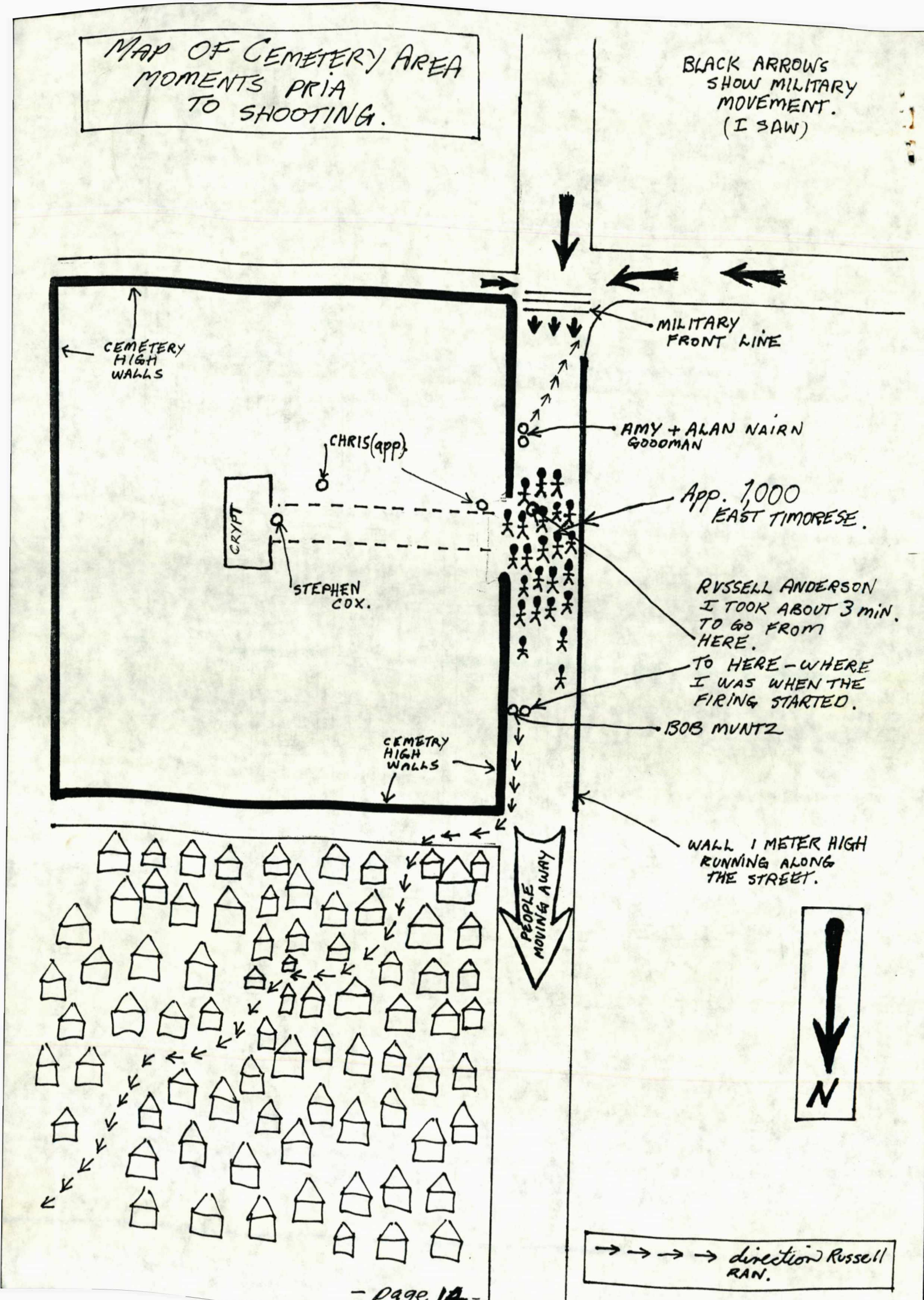
NOTE - MAP NOT TO SCALE
MASSACRE SITE.
DIRECTION + ROUTE OF DEMONSTRATION
DIRECTION I RAN (RUSSELL ANDERSON). AFTER FIRING STARTED.
Hospital
Jl Balide
POLICE
TOURIST INFORMATION
Jl Kaikoli
Jl Kulutun
Mariket
Hospital
TELECOMUNICATION FACILITIES
STADIUM
Basmery Hasmoni
Jl Vila Verde
Jl Belarmino Lobo
Jl Bispo Medeiros
Jl Jasinto Candido
POLICE
Binteng Fajar Book Shop
SHOPPING CENTRE MONEY CHANGER
Imigration Office
GOVERNOR OFFICE
Pousada New Inn
Jl Bairo Pite
Jl Jose Maria Marques
Bank
Dili Hotel
POST OFFICE
photo shop
Hotel
Tauria Inn
PRAMUKA MONUMENT
Turismu Hotel
Jl Marcha Carmona
Jl Av Sada Bandeira
Jl Gov Alves Aldeia
Jl America Thomas
Inn
Jl Comoro
Road to Iquica - Maubara
HARBAUR INTEGRATION MONUMENT
WHITE SAND BEACH
MOTAEL CHURCH
Lighthouse
Market
FAROL BEACH
COMORO AIRPORT


MAP OF CEMETERY AREA MOMENTS PRIA TO SHOOTING.
BLACK ARROWS SHOW MILITARY MOVEMENT. (I SAW)
CEMETERY HIGH WALLS
MILITARY FRONT LINE
AMY + ALAN NAIRN GOODMAN
CHRIS(app)
CRYPT
STEPHEN COX.
App. 1,000 EAST TIMORESE.
RVSSELL ANDERSON I TOOK ABOUT 3 min. TO GO FROM HERE.
TO HERE - WHERE I WAS WHEN THE FIRING STARTED.
BOB MUNTZ
CEMETRY HIGH WALLS
WALL 1 METER HIGH RUNNING ALONG THE STREET.
PEOPLE MOVING AWAY
N
→ → → → direction Russell RAN.